

# DPH Encourages Testing for Hepatitis C

**DOVER** – The Division of Public Health (DPH) and its partners are working to raise awareness of viral hepatitis by encouraging priority populations to get tested, specifically for hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection. One of these priority populations, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), are people born from 1945–1965, sometimes referred to as baby boomers. The CDC indicates they are 5 times more likely to have hepatitis C than other adults.

Hepatitis is the name of a family of three viral infections that affect the liver: hepatitis A, hepatitis B and hepatitis C. Hepatitis A and B can be prevented by vaccines. While hepatitis C has no vaccine, it can now be cured with medications.

Hepatitis C is the most common bloodborne infection in the United States. Chronic HCV infection can lead to serious health issues, including liver disease, liver failure, liver cancer, and death.

“We want to reinforce the importance of being tested for hepatitis C, particularly if you are in one of the higher risk populations,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “The disease is serious, so knowing your hepatitis C status is vitally important.”

Symptoms of acute hepatitis C may include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal pain, joint pain, and vomiting. However, most people with acute HCV infection do not have any symptoms and are unaware of their infection. About 75 percent of people who are infected develop a long-term infection called chronic hepatitis C, which can lead to conditions like liver cancer and cirrhosis, or scarring of the liver and liver

failure. Hepatitis C infection is one of the top reasons people get liver transplants.

Hepatitis C is usually transmitted when blood from an infected person enters the body of someone who is not infected. The disease is highly infectious and is easily transmitted, even in microscopic amounts of blood. Transmission of HCV occurs mainly through the sharing of needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment. It may also be transmitted through sexual contact or from an infected mother to her baby at birth.

Based upon CDC recommendations, DPH particularly encourages screening for HCV infection in people at high risk for. This includes adults born between 1945 and 1965 (a one-time test regardless of risk), those who presently inject or have ever injected drugs, those with certain medical conditions including but not limited to persons who received clotting factor concentrates produced before 1987, those who have ever been on long-term hemodialysis, received a blood transfusion, blood components, or an organ transplant before July 1992, or those who have HIV infection. To find a testing site near you, visit <https://gettested.cdc.gov/>.

In the United States, 3.5 million people are estimated to be chronically infected with HCV. There were 2,599 HCV cases reported in Delaware in 2016, however the majority of infected individuals do not know they are infected. Hepatitis C now kills more Americans than HIV.

If you're unsure of your risk for hepatitis C, visit the [DPH hepatitis web page](#) and take a risk assessment, or speak with your health care provider. For more information, or to report a hepatitis C case, call the DPH Adult Viral Hepatitis program at 302-744-1050.

*A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY*

*services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.*

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.